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Man and Monarch

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A POEM

DELIVERED BEFORE THE THURSDAY EVENING CLUB,

19 FEBRUARY, 1903,

AT THE HOUSE OF

MRS. ISABELLA (STEWART) GARDNER,

BY

WILLIAM EVERETT.

BOSTON:
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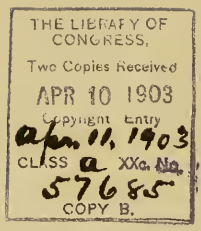
1903.



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WILLIAM EVERETT,
QUINCY, MASS.

MAN AND MONARCH.

IN halls like these, where art's control
Gives canvas life and marble soul,
And calls from night in form and hue
Creatures than truth herself more true,
Whose is the lively life alone
Where we, the living, seem but stone, —
One thought in many a mind hath sprung,
Hath burst, perchance, on many a tongue; —
"Since Genius all these gifts could pour,
Why sheds it not one gift the more?
Venetian, Tuscan, Spaniard, Greek, —
They live, they breathe — ah, why not speak?

We see, we feel, — our straining ear
Waits for their voice, but cannot hear:
The soul, the sympathy is there, —
Why breaks no word the sluggish air?"

They are not mute; to us alone,
Nature's dull offspring, comes no tone;
Among themselves these sons of heaven
Find voice and word and accent given;
Canvas to canvas, stone to stone,
Speaks in a language all their own;
And while we blend our earth-born gaze
With foolish censure, morbid praise,
Their nobler lips, of genius born,
Scarce drop on us a word of scorn,
Then to each other's lips reply
With thought sublime and feeling high.

As memory runs through storied halls
Where blaze with gems of art the walls,

Two deathless figures seem to stand
And talk with accents of command,
Made vital by the painter's brush
To bid our mortal babblings hush,
Each spurning with a high disdain
A rival's right o'er man to reign.
  One showed a quaint fantastic face
Named for the father of our race,
Where Cranach's pencil, roughly taught,
To life the Lord of Eden brought.
No Tuscan hue, no Grecian line,
Glows in that dreamy, stiff design;
We scarce believe such shackled art
In Dürer's land and age had part.
Yet not unthoughtful he, whose view
E'en thus the gardener Adam drew,
Strange to this life, and scarce escaped
From nothing, tintless and unshaped.
  A charger white the second rode,
Yet seemed himself to bear a load

Of care and doubt, and haughtiest pain,
Disdaining e'en to show disdain.
The monarch, who, not yet laid down
On the dark block his life and crown,
Lives on the canvas of Vandyke,
Too deftly true, too sadly like,
Features and garb, and hue and form
Wonders to take our hearts by storm,
And Rubens may himself confess
His pupil was his masterpiece!
Full on the Stewart Adam's eye
Was turned: — "And thou, who rid'st so high,—
Looking so scornful, yet so sad,
As though 'twere irksome to be glad,
What son of Heaven, what starry king
Wast thou, such cold contempt to fling,
On me, on all who round thee stand,
Thy father, and thy brothers' band?"
Then answered Charles: — "The fairest isle
Of all that greet the ocean's smile,

The noblest race, upon my brow
Their crown beheld; — my father thou?
My sires were kings; no loftier line
Hath ever borne the regal sign.
Thy form uncouth, thy bearing rude,
Were never kin to Stewart blood."
Said Adam: — "Did thy royal clan
Bear offspring more or less than man?
And were those more or less than men
That felt thy cold disdainful ken?
An older king was I than thou,
A prouder circlet ringed my brow;
The earth was given to me to tame
And from its wilderness to reclaim,
To win, with all subduing spade
More lands than all thy house have swayed."
Unchanged his look of pride, again
The king replied; — "And what were men,
If nought beyond thy delving spade,
Their savage souls submissive made?

A nobler craft their minds must school.
A higher law their passions rule;
To royal hearts of finer mould
Alone the secrets are unrolled,
By law, by worship and by art
To tame and guide the wilful heart;
I spread before my people's sight
The spoils of art's creative might
Bade richer temples draw their eyes,
And sweeter songs of service rise;
In ordered beauty set their days,
And curbed their rude and wanton ways."
Grim smiled the father of mankind; —
"And did thy craft their spirits bind?
Did they bend meekly at thy throne,
And thy diviner spirit own?
Did art and order win the day
O'er native hearts' untrammeled play?
And does thy children's sceptre still
Control and guide their people's will?"

Sadly the Stewart answer made; —
" Ungrateful was the land I swayed.
It would not bear a father's rule,
Nor study in a father's school.
The art, the order that I used,
Its stubborn wilful souls refused;
Laid on their monarch hands profane.
Defiled at last by murder's stain."
" O foolish son! " the gardener said,
" Thy woes be on thy reckless head!
What, could not e'en thy narrow heart
See nature's claims must vanquish art?
Hast thou not heard, the mightiest king
And meanest boor from one stock spring?
Beneath that raiment rich and gay
Thy royal flesh is nought but clay!
Clay like thy brothers', clay like mine,
Than ours no more, no less divine.
Vain man, wouldst thou thy people sway
As God wert thou, and beasts were they?

Those men that moved thy scorn so high,
Thy brothers were, — thy father I !
Thinkst thou to fool a nation free
By craft, withholding liberty ?
Or that that old and stalwart race
Would bend like slaves to kingly grace ?
What kings to men as men impart
Their people take with grateful heart,
But boons they give as gods to men,
Shall in their face be flung again ;
Nor man like beasts his brothers tame
Whose blood from Eden's gardener came."
They ceased — the monarch and the man —
Nature's hot force ; art's crafty plan.
On the dark Stewart's forehead still
Throbbed the full veins of lordly will,
Assured that o'er the ignoble throng
To higher souls should power belong.
And still on Adam's ruder mien
The blood of all mankind was seen,

To claim the share of breath divine
Instinct in all of Eden's line.
  Who shall the endless strife appease?
Nature and art who set at ease?
How shall the kings of mind bear sway
O'er men as truly kings as they,
And art her deep-wrought craft reveal
For soul of simplest man to feel?
  Here only, where a royal heart
Flings wide for all the doors of art.
Adam and Charles are dead and gone —
Stewart and Gardner reign in one.

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